THINE INCREASE

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BY

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PREFACE

THIS small book is entirely concerned with the subject of systematic giving, and is an attempt to remove obstacles from the path of those who desire or who ought to desire to honour God and serve their fellow-men in this way. In its pages will be found indicated a system of giving adapted to the case of those readers who are honestly able to plead poverty in this matter, such system being derived from sources purely Scriptural. But for the great majority of readers the customary standard is the one inculcated.

I feel that it is incumbent upon me to take this opportunity of tendering my warm thanks both to the Press and to the public for the most kindly reception accorded to my previous work, *The Whole Tithe.*

P. W. T.

"BRING FORTH ALL THE TITHE OF THINE INCREASE,
THAT THE LORD THY GOD MAY BLESS THEE."

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Chapter I

SOME little time ago the writer happened one evening to be taking a stroll during the course of which his footsteps led him into the neighbourhood of a large tent in which a religious meeting was being held. As he neared the tent he heard the speaker remark, " Remember, brethren, that a man's pocket is usually the last part of him to get converted." This was arresting. The reverend gentleman was evidently dealing with a subject which had lain upon our heart and conscience for many years. Approaching the door of the meeting we were in time to hear the " illustration " which consisted of, as nearly as we can remember it, the following story :—

A few years back a certain negro church in one of the Southern States of North America was in circumstances of financial stress, as is customary with churches, black and white. They had a meeting to consider the situation, and resolved that the best way out of the difficulty was to hold a further meeting at which gifts should be received by the chairman. No bazaar, no theatricals, no raffles, no whist drives—just plain honest straightforward gifts to God. They further passed a threefold resolution concerning the said donations, namely (1) that every man should give; (2) that every man should give according to his means; (3) that every man should give cheerfully.

A week elapsed, and the night of the adjourned

meeting came. The church was packed with a darkness that might be felt and was ebony. The chairman inaugurated the proceedings, and then called upon Brother Jones, a prominent and well to do church member, to make his donation. Brother Jones advanced to the platform, produced something negligible, and handed it to the chairman, who waved it aside. "Brudder, dat is not in 'cordance wif de second resolution."

Jones went a deeper dye, and searched in his pockets for a further coin, which he fairly flung at the chairman's head. It was also returned, with the gentle admonition, "Brudder, dat is not in 'cordance wif de fird resolution."

This time things looked very black indeed. Jones, inwardly storming, stood first on one foot and then on the other, glaring at his mentor, but doing nothing to rise to the occasion. Then a man in the audience started praying for him. Now Jones was a sincere Christian—with an unconverted purse—and under the influence of the prayer he came to himself. A smile stole over his face, then another, until it was wreathed in smiles. Plunging his hand deep in his pocket he pulled out something really handsome, and handing it courteously to the presiding genius he said, "Dere, Massa Chairman, I tank God I'm in 'cordance wif all tree resolutions."

The tent audience enjoyed the yarn, which had been exceedingly racily told. When the laughter subsided, the speaker said, "Yes, you laugh, and rightly. But all the same there is something in that story for you to think about, and when you have gone home I want you to think and to act." This was the

application. " And if you will let your thinking lead to definite action, God will bless you a hundredfold." This was the short and simple peroration.

This little incident will serve admirably as a jumping off point. We are writing in the hope of persuading our readers how easy it is for a man who believes in God to give, and give in accordance with his means, and give cheerfully. The book will probably be read chiefly by Christians, but it is addressed to all honest men who fear God. And in using the word " fear " we, of course, use it in its proper Scriptural significance as meaning the recognition of the fact that God Is, and that, therefore, we have duties towards Him which must be performed. If by any chance it should find its way into the hands of a sincere Jew it may have a message for him also. For in a recent copy of the *Jewish Chronicle* we came across a passage which is so remarkable that we reproduce it. It is taken from an interview with Rabbi W. Hirsch, B.A., who had a short while before returned from Shanghai. In the course of the interview the Rabbi said :—

" During my stay in Shanghai I made many friends among the various missionaries and worked together with them on different committees. I often felt envious when I saw the countless millions which Christians of various countries are spending in China for the spreading of their ideals. I wish that the Jews might emulate them and spend a little on the Far East, not to convert others to Judaism, but just to prevent the Jews from going over to paganism—to a degraded and demoralising paganism. . . . Of course there is the great objection which is raised by many. They say the Jews of Shanghai are rich enough to

support . . . themselves. But it is not the very best humanity to let a person die or starve because he happens to have rich relatives. The Jews of the Far East are committing spiritual suicide. That is true. But what man with a shred of humanity in him would stand and look on while a man is wilfully drowning himself, without lifting a finger to help him."

The view which the Rabbi takes of the missionary activities of the Christians is exceedingly flattering to us. Fortunately for our reputation he is not aware that so far as missionary work is concerned we have spent one pound where ten would have done. But his picture of his brethren in the East is disheartening, and it only points, as so many other things do, to that deep declension in vital belief which is assailing all men everywhere. We esteem him for his outspokenness, and trust that his words will bear fruit. It is no satisfaction to Christians to know that members of the race from which our Lord came are in danger of going over to "a degraded and demoralising paganism."

It will be noticed that Rabbi Hirsch only mentions the pecuniary difficulty. Despite the lowered ideals of the times he entertains no doubt that, given the necessary maintenance, a Jewish minister or ministers could be found of sufficient piety and learning to fill the breach and avert the catastrophe. It is the same with ourselves. On the same day on which the *Jewish Chronicle* from which we have quoted reached us we also received a North of England newspaper. It contained an account of the annual meeting of a church well known to us. In the course of the proceedings the vicar warned his parishioners as to the almost

certain lack of proper clerical workers in the future. His excellent curate would certainly be leaving them to take charge of a parish. Benefices had already been offered to him, but the incomes attached thereto were so contemptible that he had been advised to wait until something better presented itself. This waiting could not endure for ever, and when the curate went, it was unlikely that they would be permitted another, as "curates are getting so scarce that they will have to be rationed." This would mean that the whole work of the parish, not so long ago carried on by the vicar, two curates, and a lay reader, would devolve upon the vicar only. The only remedy he could suggest was to seek out young men in other avocations who were of sound Christian character, and pay their expenses and maintenance whilst being trained for the Church. Again be it noted that the vicar expressed not the least doubt or hesitation as to the possibility of finding such men, and we happen to know that his views as to what a clergyman ought to be are such as would be satisfactory to the most exacting and conscientious of bishops. Apparently the men are there—it is all a matter of finding the money for their training.

To put it in another way, the Almighty has already prepared the men. The Church can be manned at any time that it chooses to be. The only difficulty lies in the small, irregular, haphazard, and unmethodical habits of the church members as regards their giving. For this lack of method we do frankly blame the clergy, for they have not taught us systematically as regards our duties in this immensely important matter. Nevertheless, the Scriptures deal plainly

with this subject, and when listening to the lessons in church passages have come before our notice which ought to have aroused our sense of responsibility. Given a congregation trained to regular methodical "honouring of God with their substance" and there could never, so far as that congregation was concerned, have been any dearth of funds for training and maintaining suitable candidates for clerical orders or for any other good purpose. But even without that congregational training individual Christians might have done much—might have done amply sufficient to have prevented things from ever getting to their present pass. Our consciences cannot excuse us in this matter. Let us then begin by freely acknowledging our transgression, and not by making the miserable excuse, "the clergyman Thou gavest me, he never taught me." Our Protestant forefathers fought for an "open Bible." There have been many peculiar Bibles, much loved by sellers of ancient books, such as the Breeches Bible, the Wicked Bible, the Treacle Bible, and the like. The Bible which has descended to us seems to be the Paradox Bible. The Paradox Bible is the "open Bible" that never gets opened. Perhaps you have one on your shelf. Get it down and read 2 Corinthians ix. 7. And resolve that for the future you are going to have the love of God continually resting upon you. Having firmly determined to live "in accordance with all three resolutions," just have a word with your spiritual adviser and ask him sometime to give his congregation a sermon from the above text or a cognate one. And keep at him till he does it.

It has fallen to our lot to read much literature on the subject of systematic giving, and one fact has impressed itself upon our notice. Whilst all those

who have dealt with the question concur in the absolute necessity of the standard of beneficence being greatly raised, if the church is in any manner to discharge its obligations, they are nevertheless disposed to regard the average church member as rather a benevolently inclined sort of individual. Now to have the inclination present, and the money most decidedly absent, takes a little accounting for. Generally, it is explained by the statement that "the people have never had the matter properly put before them" or words to that effect. Despite what we have ourselves said, is it altogether true that we have "never had the matter put before us?" There is a sense in which we are having it everlastingly put before us. It is impossible to pick up a journal, secular or religious, without having our attention drawn to half a dozen or more charities in urgent need of funds. Every now and then a really startling paragraph gets into the paper relative to the poverty of some unfortunate clerical incumbent. Appeals are incessant. Being possessed of ordinary intelligence, we know that orphanages and hospitals are not carried on for the joke of the thing, but because of the pressing and continuous necessities of the case. And we also know, or would do if we had ever given five minutes consideration to the matter, that if all persons in our nation who have anything of the fear of God about them subjected their incomes to a reasonable levy such appeals would cease. Twenty years ago it was calculated that just one per cent. of the annual national income was given in charity, using that term in its broadest sense. Are things any better now? We doubt it.

Then if we have a vast mass of more or less religiously

and benevolently inclined persons, stated to be not so unready to give to the Sacred Treasury, and we also find that Treasury to be in an empty and bankrupt condition, what has occurred? We ourselves hold that there certainly has been a lack of instruction on definitely Scriptural lines, that the people have had the matter "put before them" in the way that the newspaper does, but not in the way that the Book does. And we also hold that too often we attach, in our private reading of the Scriptures, when we do read them, an "if" or a "perhaps" where the Scriptures themselves know none. In other words we simply disbelieve the repeated and emphatic promises of the Almighty on this very subject, making in very truth the promises of God of none effect through our unbelief. God knows the necessities of the clergy, and the orphanages, and the hospitals; not only knows them but had a foreknowledge of them. And having had a foreknowledge of them He made the most ample provision for meeting them. Probably this has been the case from the very time of the origin of the human race, for the beginnings of God's declared claims upon human possessions are lost in obscurity. And the blessings of God upon faithful stewardship started with the first faithful steward.

The reason why we have these urgent cries from the sick and the indigent lies in the fact that some of God's gold lies in your pocket. And God cannot trust you with more till you are faithful in the use of what you have. That is the whole case written on much less than Lord Balfour's half sheet of notepaper.

If our readers have not received proper instruction from their clergy as to the disposal of their money, or

if in reading their Bibles the truth of the matter has not gone forcibly home to them, we shall endeavour ourselves very briefly to indicate what we believe, both from study and experience, to be the real teaching of Scripture on this matter. In addressing ourselves to this attempt we shall of course not repeat the enquiry into the complete tithing system of ancient Israel which we have already made elsewhere. Our aim is much simpler than that. If perchance our words should reach some clergyman or minister whose conscience accuses him of laxity in dealing with this subject in the pulpit, we trust that for the future he will take proper opportunity for occasional and earnest reference thereto. Govett, writing exclusively for the ministry (*Entrance into the Kingdom*, p. 166), says: "Shall others give account to Christ how they spent their money and their time; and shall not we be the more called on to account, how we *taught* them to use their money and their time?" Govett believed that neglect of such a responsibility might mean exclusion of a minister from the Kingdom, though not from salvation. Whether we believe him or not on this point, his warning as quoted above is sufficiently salutary.

Let us take a few texts of Scripture dealing with the subject of giving, and note what they have to say. Thus—"Thou shalt surely give [to the poor man] and thine heart shalt not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works" (*Deuteronomy* xv. 10). "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive: and he shall be

blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness" (*Psalm* xli. 1-3). "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (*Proverbs* iii. 9, 10). "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" (*Proverbs* xix. 17). "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack" (*Proverbs* xxviii. 27). "God loves the giver who gives cheerfully. God is able to bless you with ample means, so that you may always have quite enough for any emergency of your own and ample besides for any kind act to others . . . you will be enriched on all hands, so that you can be generous on all occasions" (2 *Corinthians* ix. 8, 11; *Moffat's translation*).

Professor David Smith says "It is the testimony of Scripture that 'God loves a blithe giver' and recompenses liberality. It is the sowing of a rich harvest." And in view of the passages noted above he may well say so. We have only taken half a dozen such quotations, almost at random. The list could have been greatly extended. They all teach one and the same thing, namely, that to him who gives shall be given. Further, that for the man who gives cheerfully there is not only material recompense but a possibility of infinitely greater things. "God loves a blithe giver." And it is unlikely that the love of God towards man will manifest itself in material things only.

Let it be emphasised, for in any pulpit reference to the subject which we hear at the present day this assurance is apt to be woefully wanting, let it be emphasised that after every commandment to give there comes the solemn assurance that he who gives shall not lack himself. God knows your circumstances and your anxieties. Not only so, He ardently desires to ameliorate the former and to do away with the latter. He knows, speaking of the majority of cases, that you cannot give. The poor require some portion of your money, but as things are you are poor yourself, and simply cannot afford the luxury of charity. With Income Tax at its present assessment and educational expenses at their present figure the poverty of the wealthy is a real thing. And in the case of those of another social grade, though wages have come down, the cost of living has not, to the same extent. "There's little to get, and many to keep." Three pounds in paper in King George's time go no further than thirty shillings in gold in Queen Victoria's day. In fact, the more life changes the more its the same thing. Of yourself you dare not let go of what you have. But in the light of God's promises you may, and must.

Furthermore, the burden of the poor and needy lies so heavily upon the heart of God, that He will permit no man the honour of supplying their necessities. If you "give to the poor" you merely "lend to the Lord." That is all. And that which you have "given" will be re-paid. This is the basic fact of all giving, that God will be no man's debtor. The maintenance of your minister God looks upon as though it were His own maintenance, and He cannot and will not be

beholden to you for it. So in the case of the poverty-stricken and the sick. They are God's charge, and if you bear God's charges, you will find that you are dealing with a Debtor of scrupulous honour. You have not hitherto realised this, with the result that the provision which has been made for minister and orphan has not reached them. It has remained in your own banking account. It never arrived at its destination. It is in your keeping still. Will you see to it that it gets to the people for whom it was intended, and by your act "prove God" and His faithfulness?

Think what an opportunity this has given to the blasphemer. We well remember a street preacher being tackled by a member of his audience as to the possibility of there being a good God, when in the slums around them there existed a multitude of helpless, unhappy, and half-starved children. The same question has been asked ten thousand times. The answer is that no child ever yet came into the world to be ill-treated. God has in the first case made provision for it by giving it a father. If he die, or prove unfaithful to his trust, then there is sufficient of God's money lying in the pockets of other people for all the child's necessities. Only it still lies there, and consequently the mite is abandoned to the Devil after the Deity has already foreseen the necessity and supplied all the funds requisite for that very necessity. Upon which men ignorant of God's frustrated purposes say that either there is no God, or, if there be One, He is not good. God is good, but man has failed Him, and failed frightfully. Is your own conscience clear in this matter?

We often hear the phrase "Scriptural giving," but after all in the light of Scripture there seems to be no such thing. It ought to be re-named "Scriptural lending." God is the Almighty King and Ruler. You and I are only creatures of His power. He will not receive patronage from men. That which is "given" can only be a temporary gift, or in plain English, a loan. It is returned. At the same time the fact of thus "lending to the Lord" shows a believing and God-honouring stewardship. And the faithful steward will never go for long without the expressed approval of his Master. "God's promises may tarry, but they never fail."

The very notion that for a benevolent man there should be a divine reward, bestowed upon this earth, seems to drive some good people into a paroxysm of wrath. We are told that such teaching is "unspiritual," to which we reply that we care not one rap whether it is spiritual or unspiritual, so long as it is Scriptural. We believe that the Old Book is the one text book upon this subject, and that it is our duty individually to obey its behests, for the reasons which the Book gives, without any argument whatsoever. If in nearly every instance throughout its pages where this matter is dealt with we are urged to give with the certainty placed before us of an experience of God's providence towards us arising out of our very act of giving, that is enough. If, after this, we tender our offerings to the Sacred Treasury with the lurking hope of receiving no reward whatsoever, of rendering service to the Deity which we trust He will accept without return, then our turn of mind is certainly "spiritual," but after the spirituality of Satan. His

suggestion to our first parents was that they should be "as Gods," that is "equal with God," and this suggestion he often reiterates to their descendants, as opportunity allows. We wish to deal rather strongly with this aspect of the question, for we happen to know that there is much false teaching on this subject in high places,—evangelically high places even. Certain literature bearing upon it has astounded us both on account of its source, and of its direct contradiction of the plain word of Scripture. If God promises a reward for your giving, and you give hoping for no reward, you are either judging God, or patronising God, or disbelieving God, and that is the whole sum and substance of the matter.

If you think that to give in expectation of recompense is to give from a wrong motive, after the Deity's having repeatedly, through His word, urged you to give, placing that motive before you, then you are judging God. The motives which He thinks good enough for you are in your opinion beneath your notice. You are more righteous than your Maker. A man who starts by being more righteous than the Deity may well end up by being less righteous than the Devil. That is exactly what your spiritual adversary has in mind in placing this ultra-holiness before you. To declare your wish to serve God from sheer love, without any hope of reward whatsoever, sounds so well, and is so wicked, that such a thought can only be inspired by a power astutely evil. If we do serve God, as we ought to, from love, then implicit unjudging obedience must be the first outcome of that love, and in so far as this is not the case our love is defective. As a matter of fact, love and duty must be intermingled,

for love to be perfect, and for duty to be rendered graciously. Before gold can be used as a medium of exchange it must be hardened by an admixture of alloy; otherwise it will be too soft a metal for its purpose. And similarly that feeling towards God and our fellow-men which causes us to say "I should love to" must be stiffened with the further motive "and I ought to." It is noticeable that those three great saints St. Paul, Martin Luther, and John Wesley, had years of apprenticeship to the law before they knew anything about grace. That is why they became great saints. Unquestioning, soldierly obedience had entered into their very blood. They fulfilled the commands of God instantly and without argument. They were satisfied with such reasons for the said commands as the Deity had given, and even though they were not furnished with a reason they would still obey a clear undoubted order. So much the more is such a disciplined spirit incumbent upon us much lesser folk. If the Deity everywhere enjoins us to give, adding the statement that he who gives, gets, that is simply an indication of His own royal will and pleasure. The silver is His, and the gold is His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. These things are committed to our stewardship. An honest steward is sure of a recompense. It is the declared desire and intention of the Almighty that it should be so. Let that end it. God's wishes are not to be looked upon askance as "unspiritual." If you have got into this habit renovate your thought in the light of Scriptural teaching. Cease to judge your Maker, and no longer endeavour to patronise Him. The majesty of the Creator could never permit of His

accepting gifts from the creature without a royal return.

As for the man who stumbles in his giving because he disbelieves God's promises, we are only too painfully aware from our own personal experience as to what unbelieving creatures we humans are, and on this score we shall judge no man, provided he be sincere. The mark of a sincere man is that he will serve his Deity in the midst of his own personal unbelief, and despite of it. How are you to know whether the promises of God are true or not until you have furnished the condition precedent to the reception of that which is promised? Having fulfilled the condition, the promise will also be fulfilled in due course. Ascertain for yourself whether or not this be the case. This is the only way, and the certain way, of obtaining the faith you need.

Such then is the plain teaching of Scripture, that giving, up to the standard which has been held out to us, is lending, and the loan returns with interest. To refrain from systematic giving is therefore an inexcusable laxity. To put it in another way, the money which the Deity has already allocated to the use of the necessitous is partially in your keeping, and if you fulfil the obligation which your stewardship imposes upon you by surrendering this trust money for the use of the beneficiary that money returns, but under new conditions, for it is then your own. We are therefore wholly culpable if we neglect this urgent duty. If the money to be devoted to this purpose were actually your own now, and went finally out of your control, then the times are so difficult that you might refrain, might be compelled to refrain, from

the luxury of parting with it. The money is not yours but it becomes so after you have made this wise and conscientious use of it. Our authority for this emphatic statement lies in the reiterated promises of the Deity.

But, you may ask, how long shall I have to wait for the promises of God to be outpoured? This you will have to find out, but God deals liberally with a liberal man, and promptly with a prompt man. Some trial of your faith there may be, if your character requires it, but this is simply an added mercy.

We have in a previous paragraph made allusion to a standard of giving, for we believe that such a standard, or series of standards, has been definitely placed before us. Save for a page or two the only one with which we deal in this small volume is the tenth, "the tithe of thine increase." The late Prebendary Webb-Peploe continually urged this tenth-giving duty upon his flock, and was wont to tell them that Christian giving only began after the tenth had been paid. As a matter of fact he was apparently in error. Jewish giving began with one tenth and perhaps—the amount is highly probable but not absolutely certain—perhaps ended with two-tenths. Christian giving is not likely to rise to a much higher level than this, though one does not know what may occur in individual cases, as a man prospers in the world and, very wisely, increases his systematic giving both actually and relatively. Bishop Wilson raised his proportion to one half, and continued this throughout his long life. He bore his testimony to the faithfulness of God in honouring his trust in language very simple and very final.

This proportion, one tenth of the increase, or income,

as we should now call it, runs through the Scriptures from Genesis to the final reference thereto in Hebrews. Mistakenly, it has been assumed that this was the sole tithe, whereas it is merely the "Whole" tithe, —quite another matter. "Whole" tithe is a technical term. It means, as we have said, one tenth of the profits. The divine favour was and is resultant upon the payment of this tithe, and in a very special manner.

The manner of the revelation of that favour is foreshadowed in the statement that for the man who surrenders the tenth the windows of Heaven shall be opened, and there shall be such an outpouring that there will not be room enough to receive it. We must cast our eyes back, and think of what this meant to the people to whom it was spoken. This first tithe had to be rendered in kind,—corn, wine, beasts, oil and the like, and the blessing returned in kind. It was promised to the faithful Israelite that in return for his habitual tithe-paying such harvests should be granted to him as would be a source of actual embarrassment to the recipient—there should not be room enough to receive them. The man would have to "pull down his barns, and build greater." In our time the practice may be the same, but our financial system renders both payment and receipt matters of easier accomplishment. Your banker, being greedy of deposits, will readily provide the barns. And instead of handing over masses of stuff to the Levitical tax-gatherer you—in part at any rate—merely forward cheques to such charities as you consider worthy of support, after attending to the matter of the collections in your own church. Perhaps some of the joy and solemnity of tithe-giving is lost by this

very simplicity of method. And we are certainly apt to lose sight to some extent of the bountifulness of the Creator in acknowledging our tenth-giving. A rise in one's salary does not strike the eye in the same way as a barn filled with plenty and a winepress bursting forth. It all seems so prosaic. Yet it ought not to do if we are possessed of any capacity for seeing into the real meaning of things.

The note of joy was to be sounded continually in the Israelitish State at every tithe or free-will offering, and gladness was to savour every gift. Then, as now, God loved the blithe giver, and the latter was to give open evidence of his blitheness, and did. Gifts to the Treasury, tithe or other, would we think be most frequently presented at times of festival, and there were three annual feasts of this description. In the beautiful surroundings of Jerusalem these must have been occasions abounding with enthusiastic happiness. At Pentecost, for instance, the altar was surrounded by choirs of Levites, in robes of white and gold, singing the Hillel (*Psalms* cxiii-cxviii), whilst after each verse the crowd of worshippers chorussed a deep-toned "Hallelujah." When the first-fruits were offered, the country farmers divided themselves into bands of twenty-four persons each. All such bands were headed by a Levite, and a piper. The sacrificial bull, with gilded horns, came next, then the worshippers in procession, all singing to the sound of the pipe. Anyone standing on the walls of Jerusalem on the festival day must have seen the Holy City well-nigh surrounded by a multitude of these small troups winding their way over the hill paths to Mount Sion, which leads us to suggest that in any revival of tithe

giving, there must be a revival of this rejoicing spirit. There may well be, for we are in our gifts honouring God, helping man, and placing ourselves in the direct line of the bounty which the Creator so ardently desires should be ours. We speak very seriously when we say that what the Church needs most to-day are these two things, giving and thanksgiving, and that when these two essential elements of worship are more widespread than is now the case, then that revival of religion, which is absolutely essential if the English speaking people are to accomplish their allotted task in the world, will be much nearer.

Some will say that the first step in such a revival must be repentance for our national sins. How are you going to bring this repentance about? You suggest by preaching. We concur, but unless the spiritual power which alone produces results be present, the best preacher is little better than sounding brass and the worst than a tinkling cymbal. Now this spiritual power is solely the gift of God. After robbing God of the money which is His and the praise which is His we still apparently expect that His best gifts will be freely bestowed upon us. By what mysteriously illogical process do we arrive at this result? Remember the incident related in *Nehemiah* viii. 9-12, when a people mourning for their sins, after hearing their neglected law expounded to them, were summarily told to cease mourning, and keep the day merrily in feasting and sending presents one to another, because the day happened to be "holy unto the Lord." The law could wait till next day—on which the reading was resumed.

It has been said that the Reformation was a deep

call to repentance—as it undoubtedly was—and that this note of repentance left so sombre a tone in the services of the reformed churches that the old note of joy in the worship of God has never been recovered. Probably there is something in the idea. The Methodists, by their hymn-singing, did something to bring this "lost chord" back—we think it is a matter of history that hymns were not much sung in the Church of England until the Methodists had set the fashion. But much remains to be done. When men sing the praises of their Creator lustily a service can hardly become unendurably dull, it will tend quite in an opposite direction. Some non-Churchgoers will be attracted by the happier atmosphere, perhaps many. If you want a crowded church preach the old truths straightforwardly and sing the old hymns heartily. Not forgetting to add to your hymnal collection occasionally, of course. In particular, sing a triumphant hymn when collecting and presenting the offertory. Offer your gifts with gladness. We have been informed that at the full Temple service at Jerusalem three choirs each consisting of eight thousand Levites would take part. One of the tunes they sang, "Leoni," has come down to our day. When the offertory is made let choir and congregation thunder out "The God of Abram praise," to the tune "Leoni." We are not likely to outdo the ancient Jews in their liberality. Let us see if we can in the joy with which our offerings are presented. Choir and congregation together will at their best sound feebly in comparison with the thunder of twenty-four thousand male voices. But we are only expected to do our best, and having done this, and habitually doing it, in the double rendering of

tithe and praise, let us be firmly assured that that Holy and Spiritual Gift of God, so sadly needed by our nation, will descend in God's time. And on that day, repentance will be real and unfeigned.

Early in the history of the Church, the collection is noted as an important act of worship, necessary to the completeness of divine service. Thus, in the *First Apology* of Justin Martyr, that very noble philosopher who, after his conversion to Christianity still continued to wear his philosopher's cloak, there appears the following :—" On the day called Sunday all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the *Memoirs of the Apostles* [Gospels] or the writings of the prophets, are read as long as time permits. Then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president, in like manner, offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people assent, saying, ' Amen.' And there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given ; and to those that are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do and willing give what each thinks fit ; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the stranger sojourning among us ; and, in a word, takes care of all who are in need."

This would be written about A.D. 146. But an earlier

passage still, culled from the *Didache*, can be put in evidence. This book, discovered by Bryennius, the Metropolitan of Nicomedia, in 1873 and published by him with a Greek commentary in Constantinople ten years later, was probably written during the first century, and contains much information relative to the methods and teaching prevalent in the early church. In it there appears the following : " Every true prophet who is minded to settle among you, is worthy of his maintenance. In like manner a true teacher also is worthy, like every workman, of his maintenance. Thou shalt take, therefore, all first fruits of the produce of winepress and threshing floor, of oxen and sheep, and give them to the prophets, for they are your high priests. But if ye have no prophet, give to the poor. If thou art making bread, take the first fruits and give according to the commandment. In like manner, when thou openest a jar of wine or oil, take the first fruits and give to the prophets. And of money and raiment, and of every chattel, take the first fruits, as seemeth thee good, and give according to the commandment."

The latter quotation, it may be admitted, has little necessary direct reference to a collection taken in church, or at a religious service, but it points the way to the ultimate necessity for such means of getting together the gifts of the faithful. As it stands, it seems to have been written for a very simple country people, and is merely an injunction to maintain their ministers and teachers with generous adequacy. The donations seem to have been largely in kind, though not wholly so. As life became at the same time simpler and more complex, as money became more

and more the medium of exchange, and congregations tended to become larger, the method of giving inculcated in the *Didache* would naturally give way to that portrayed by Justin Martyr—a customary collection of coin taken during divine worship. Still it is valuable as indicating the importance attached to systematic giving in the very earliest years of church history. Nothing could be more systematic than the habitual honouring of God by rendering the first-fruits of all things, cash and kind, either to the clergy or the poor, as laid down in the passage adduced.

Justin Martyr, it will be observed, uses the phrase "those who are well to do and willing" as those from whom the offertory proceeded. Human nature never changes, and it is therefore legitimate to assume that some of the well to do were not willing, and that some of the willing were not well to do, just as we find it to be to-day. With reference to the former we hope to say a few words later on. For the really poor who really want to give, and to give methodically, we have in readiness a scheme for the exercise of their benevolence which we proceed to propound now. We believe that the suggestion which we bring before them has not previously been made by any writer on the subject, and request that their courteous and earnest attention be accorded to what we have to say.

In *Deuteronomy* xiv. 28, 29, there appears the law of the Third Tithe. Every third year this tithe was to be levied, laid up at home—not handed to the Levites, as was the case with the Whole Tithe—and utilized for the relief of the local poor, including the village Levite and any stranger sojourning in the locality. It was a tithe equal to the sum of two

shillings in the pound on the produce of the farm, and was dedicated in kind, not in money, one-tenth of the various products of agriculture being placed aside in the store-house and doled out as occasion arose during the ensuing three years. There was a reason for this tithe being taken in the third year, which we shall consider in its place. It will readily be apparent that a tax of two shillings in the pound every three years is the equivalent of an annual payment of eightpence per pound per annum. This was the Poor's Tithe. Is it impossible for this Poor's Tithe now to take its place permanently as the tithe of the poor? Whatever your income, could you not readily lay aside eightpence of every pound thereof for the Sacred Treasury? If your wage be thirty shillings per week your obligation is discharged by a weekly gift of one shilling to your church offertory. Can you not manage this?

Now we do not want every reader of this small volume to lay it down at this point and exclaim, "Eightpence in every pound of my income for God! Oh yes, certainly!! What a delightful idea, and so *easy*!!!" The substitution of the Third for the Whole Tithe is alone permissible, where it is permissible at all, in the case of downright poor persons, persons who have so little of this world's gear that honestly, truly, and after serious consideration, they find themselves led to the definite conclusion that they have not been entrusted with money to such an extent as would make our previous pages on the subject of stewardship wholly applicable in their circumstances. For such people only, we put forward this alternative as possibly allowable. There is a distinct blessing

attached to this tithe. It is to be paid "that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest." When this blessing has materialized, when you have been steadily prospered over a term of years in your trade or craft, then the time will surely come when you voluntarily enter the ranks of the whole-tithers, and experience the greater promise of "a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Meanwhile you have made an effort to honour God in such a fashion as, at present, you honestly think you can. We strongly suspect that the habitual giver of the Third Tithe will, over a series of years, prove of much greater service to the Sacred Treasury than the spasmodic giver. The latter is apt to think highly of himself as a generous-hearted fellow, but if his gifts were placed on record, their paucity and infrequency would prove a sad shock to the donor's self-esteem. And pray remember that when the "books are opened" the record will be found therein.

Why was this tithe payable out of the farm produce every three years, instead of one-third thereof being separated annually as received? Because every sixth year every Israelitish farmer who kept the Sabbatic law was promised a three-fold harvest, and it was the intention of the Donor that the poor should share therein. It is impossible to give full details here, but the sixth year's harvest was of such generous proportions that it raised the value of the Third Tithe from eightpence in the pound per annum to over ninepence, taking the average. If any of our poorer readers wishes to pay this contribution in such a way as will approximate to the same payment when made

by a faithful Israelite, let him, in addition to the weekly shilling out of his thirty shilling wage which we have already suggested, make a further and annual payment of half-a-guinea to his pet charity. This will make the account square. And it is a little addition of this sort that rather marks the difference between the giver and the blithe giver, between the man who gives because it is his duty, and the man who gives all he can consistent with his duty.

While dealing with the gifts of the poor, we are tempted to steal a most interesting paragraph from the periodical in which it recently appeared. It only proves what great endings may come from small beginnings, and how the Deity will honour those who strive to honour Him with the little they possess. It reads as follows :—" Nineteen years ago, in a workhouse, Mary Jane Hutchings was praying for foreign missions. She was blind and deaf, and it might have seemed that she was unable to do anything for the spread of the Kingdom of God ; but she was bent on doing what she could, and when she read in her Braille *Intercession Paper* that S.P.G. were starting a special department for the training of missionary candidates, she set aside the presents of money that were given her from time to time to get herself little extras, until she had five shillings to send to the editor of the *Intercession Paper* as her subscription to the fund. The result was the starting of the Candidates' Five Shilling Fund, which has never since fallen below £3,000 a year, and through which hundreds of missionaries have been sent abroad. No day passes without a contribution to the Fund coming in, and the C.M.S. has been encouraged to start a similar

fund which is also doing well, and it all arose from the prayer and self-denial of one poor woman. Friends found a home for her during the last years of her life."

This most pathetic and stirring cutting was headed, we think wrongly, "A Modern Widow's Mite." Mrs. Hutchings gave all she had, all she had been able to collect over a period, whilst the Widow of *Mark* xii. 42 was, if our information be correct, casting into the Treasury her wages for that day. We have read, on apparently good authority, that the word translated "living" in ver. 44 is a technical term implying earnings for one day. That a Jewess should present one of her six days' wages to the Treasury is a fact which will instantly seize the attention of a modern student of the Jewish tithing system. If it be mere coincidence, it is a very interesting, arresting, and remarkable coincidence. The narrative would go to prove that God looks at the spirit rather than the letter, for this poor woman, whilst faithfully discharging her pecuniary duties, and as a matter of fact, going a great deal beyond any duties attaching to one in her position, had chosen her own way of honouring her Maker, by presenting her wage to the fund for the purchase of firewood necessarily used for the Temple sacrifices. Her gift was accepted by our Lord, Who passed a tremendous encomium on the giver. The Levites could dispense with the widow's small offering. But the smoke of the sacrifice which was consumed with the product of her gift ascended to Heaven with added savour.

Let it be observed that our Lord was seated near or in the Temple Treasury when this incident occurred, that close students of Scripture believe it to have been

a favourite seat of His when on earth, and that closer students still feel an assurance tantamount to absolute certainty that He has never vacated that seat though in Heaven. Which things are a parable.

And now for a few words for the " well to do " who, in this matter of giving are not " willing." John Wesley would have made it one word, and that word " Hell." We moderns have moved from Wesley's position, and teach that believers, those who have " saving faith," all go to Heaven, whatever their pecuniary delinquencies as shown in the careful cultivation of the sin of covetousness. John would have drily asked them to show their " saving faith " by their godly works. Now, we do not intend to go very deeply into these theological questions, profoundly important as they are. We feel that there is a point where the layman must stop, and leave all further teaching to the professed theologians. Meanwhile, we venture to assert that it is of the first importance that people who are quite certain that they are " going to Heaven " should be equally certain that they have got a Heaven to go to. And we are not at all sure that Scripture teaches this in all cases. Absence of Hell is not necessarily presence of Heaven. Heaven means happiness. What are we to make of the case of a man who attains Paradise only to be wretched ?

We are aware that the story of Dives and Lazarus presents great difficulties, but nevertheless feel assured that our Lord did intend in that parable to reveal certain broad and profound truths relative to the hereafter. In the parable occurs a most remarkable phrase which we have never heard preached upon or discussed or in any way dealt with. It occurs in

Luke xvi. 26 and reads " Between us [in bliss] and you [in torture] there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot." Then there are people in Paradise who " would pass from hence " to the abode of the lost—and cannot ! Who are these persons ? Are they those who have entered the place of the blest to find it devoid of blessing, and recognize that for such as they the lower condition is the right one ? We are most anxious not to wrest Scripture or to read anything into it which is not there. But we cannot help, rightly or wrongly, associating this passage with a saying of our Lord's : " Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations." All commentators agree that the plain teaching of this text is that, while upon this earth, we are so to utilize our means for the assistance of those in want, particularly our fellow believers, that when we die those recipients of our help who have pre-deceased us may receive us into Heaven. Then it is good for a man to have friends, even in Heaven. Are those who wanted to cross the gulf believers who have attained Paradise and found it, for them, utterly empty, owing to their lack of practical warm-heartedness in this life ? Found it so empty and they themselves so conscience-smitten, that they wished rather for companionship with the lost than with the richly saved ?

We are not in a position to say that this is an indubitably false interpretation of the phrase we have noted. Let us then do what a wise and cautious man would do—take it as a warning, and a stern one. " Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven." " When thou

makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind ; and thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee ; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." " Give alms ; make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not." If you have been blessed with even moderate means in this life, see to it that a portion of those means are used in preparation for your eternal life. In the texts appearing above our Lord teaches in language so definite as to admit of no misunderstanding, that the consequences of the right use of our possessions are eternal, that earthly gold may actually and in sober truth be changed for endlessly enduring riches. It may be observed that He appears to lay the whole stress on the act, not on the motive. We are told elsewhere that all believers' actions are to be tried by fire. Scripture, we believe, nowhere teaches a purgatory for souls, but it does clearly teach that there is a purgatory for deeds. Every man's work shall be tested by fire, whether it be gold, silver, hewn stones, wood, hay or stubble. If the work be gold, silver, or good lasting building material the man shall have a reward. If it be wood, hay, or stubble it will be burnt up, destroyed, finished with. The man will not be lost, though his escape shall be like that of one who has suddenly to rush from a building burning over his head. But he enters the next world bankrupt. (1 *Corinthians* iii. 12-15). In the passages we have quoted referring to the lasting effects of alms-giving, our Lord simply said that they were lasting. Your alms must therefore be gold, silver, or stone, having a quality which the purgatorial fire cannot harm. We can only suppose that if a man from something

approaching greed became an alms-giver in hope of eternal reward, then this motive, not the very highest, would still evidence sufficient faith in the promises of God to give it some spiritual value.

We are thus personally driven to the conclusion that Wesley was substantially right, and that the well to do who act meanly towards the necessitous in this world are merely heaping up for themselves trouble in another world. If therefore you have no natural compassion for the poor, such as would lead you habitually to assist them in their distresses, do for pity's sake have some natural compassion for your own wretched little soul. Give, and give according to your means. In course of time you will come to give cheerfully. When that point is reached you will have ceased to be a wretched little soul.

Chapter II

WHEN dealing with our responsibilities towards the Sacred Treasury it will have been noticed that we approached the matter from two opposite but not necessarily mutually exclusive points of view. At times we suggested that the majority of us who are in a position to do so should voluntarily devote one-tenth of our incomes to religion and charity, and the remaining minority a sum equal to about ninepence in every pound thereof. And in other passages we inferred that one or other of the above proportions already belonged to the Deity by right, and that in surrendering them for religious or philanthropic purposes we were not making a voluntary gift, but paying a debt.

The ancient Israelitish agricultural tithe being in the nature of a rent upon a small-holding, those responsible for its payment ought certainly to have acted upon the latter assumption, and paid their rents to the Landlord with the utmost punctuality. This is obviously the standpoint from which it was incumbent upon them to regard their obligations, and it was the standpoint from which the Deity did actually regard them,—"The land is Mine . . . the tithe of the land is mine." This was the correct theoretical viewpoint. But when it came to practice, a most merciful and bountiful utterance came from the lips of Malachi, speaking as the mouthpiece of the Eternal. In correcting his countrymen for their "robbery of

God " in withholding their tithes, he termed it robbery, and thus established the principle. But having done so, he did not merely state that on the cessation of this habitual theft the parasites which had wrought such havoc on the unconsecrated crops should cease their mischief, and normal harvests should again become the order of the day. He went much further. The vine should no longer cast her fruit before the time in the field, and the " devourer " should be rebuked, so that that which the Israelite sowed or planted he should reap. He would be made certain of his maintenance. But the prophet further declared that the Deity had no intention of contenting Himself with this, the giving of an average good harvest to the payer of a customary rent. He bound Himself, as we saw previously, to give such a return on their agriculture that " there should not be room enough to receive it." Let the Israelite merely obey the law, and the Deity would reward this mere fulfilment of his legal duties as though it were an act of grace.

We are not living under the law, and the New Testament nowhere specifically lays down an ascertained proportion of our income as one acceptable to the Deity in the matter of our offerings. As it is impossible that we should have been left without guidance in so important a matter, our own belief is that all that need be said as to such annual levy had already been said in the books of the Old Testament, and that it is from their pages that we must derive our rule of conduct. We were once asked by a converted Jew if we considered that the obligations and benefits of the Hebrew tithe law were applicable in the case of men living under the present dispensation, and our reply was, " Most

certainly and emphatically yes, for anyone who has sufficient sense to shoulder the obligations and thus reap the benefits." For the experience of Christian tithe-givers has all gone one way, and that the way of proving that the Deity is no less scrupulously honourable and bountiful in His dealings with Christians than He was, and is, with Jews.

When the Hebrew paid his rent honestly, the Deity rewarded him as though he had made a voluntary gift to the Treasury. When he merely abstained from robbing God, he was dealt with as though a man of outstanding generosity. We have no rents to pay. Are we not therefore abundantly in the right in regarding our contributions to church and hospital and orphanage, even though they in their sum annually amount to as much as one tenth of our income, as being wholly in the nature of free-will offerings, gifts made to the Deity without any necessity upon our part? And are not many paragraphs in our last chapter Judaistic in their tone and utterance, and altogether opposed to our "Christian liberty"?

If our "Christian liberty" means a half-starved clergy, a half-emptied orphanage, a restricted or abandoned mission field, and an ill-equipped hospital, we are not particularly enamoured of the phrase. All these things seem in their resultant not to be the product of "Christian liberty," but of a diabolical license. Some persons teach that "grace" will get more out of a man, in the way of giving, than will law. We point to the actual condition of things as they are, and are strongly tempted to tell all such fatuous optimists that they lie. If we freely responded to grace there might be truth in what they say. But we

do not. And in this matter the only way for grace to have its way is for us to place ourselves under law, and to regard our gifts not as free-will offerings, but as debts which must be paid to the last coin and by the appointed day. This is the only method by which we can, in "honouring God with our substance," offer to God all the honour which it is in our power to render. G. H. Pember wrote, "We know generally that the grace of God follows every act of direct obedience on our part. *If we search out even the most minute commands of His law, and do them; if we show that we would not have a word uttered by Him fall to the ground,* we testify both to ourselves and to others that we do in very deed, and not in word only, recognise Him as our God and our King . . . Nor will He on His part be slow in acknowledging us as His subjects, as those who have a claim upon His aid and protection." The italics are ours.

In this question of systematic giving, let us therefore look upon ourselves as being wholly under the law, and, having surrendered our tithe, let us still form the only estimate of our action proper for us to assume—"We are unprofitable servants. We have done that which it was our duty to do." Take any other view of the matter, and we shall, as sure as human nature is human nature, fall into two sins. The first is self-righteousness, the next covetousness. Let us lay the flattering unction to our souls that our gifts are free-will offerings, something surrendered by our voluntary act, and not legally due, and it will follow as the night the day that a portion of God's dues will be spent upon ourselves. We shall inevitably in the course of our experience be tempted at some time or another to

follow this wrongful course. If in the moment of temptation we are fortified by the knowledge that the money is not our own, but God's own, payable to Him under the law, the temptation will be resisted and overcome. But if at the back of our minds we still regard the sum we had intended to present as a voluntary offering, something we are at liberty to give or withhold, then the temptation will be faintly resisted, dallied with, succumbed to.

Placing ourselves under the law, and holding therefore the position of trustee as regards our own tithing money, it follows that a strict account must be kept of all receipts and expenditure under this head. Two cases have come under our notice illustrative of the importance of this business-like habit. The first was that of a retired Army Officer, a good man, who would never have dreamt of giving less than a tithe of his income to the Deity whom he sincerely worshipped. His clergyman asked him how he knew he did this. "Oh, I should never think of giving less." "Yes, but how do you know you do." "Well, I'm certain I do. I regard it as a matter of principle." "Then as a matter of principle would you kindly look through your bank pass book and see that you have done it." The Officer promised to take this harmless step, never dreaming how necessary it was. The next day he met his vicar, and with a most crestfallen look, acknowledged that as the result of this private audit of his accounts, he had discovered a serious discrepancy between what ought to have gone to the Sacred Treasury, and what had actually gone. The matter was put right from that moment.

Some few years ago we happened to be talking to

a Christian lady, obviously most sincere both in her beliefs and her conduct. In the course of our conversation the subject of giving somehow cropped up. "Oh," she exclaimed, "talking about giving, how absolutely necessary it is to keep an account of what one gives. Now I was quite satisfied with what I was doing in the matter, till one day I thought I would just keep a record of what went out in this way. The result horrified me. Unless you keep an account you are giving about half of what you think you are." *Verbum sap.*

Giving thus to God, giving systematically, and keeping an account of your tithe and of the gifts made out of that tithe, you will, as we have previously said, be engaged in the happy and three-fold work of honouring your Maker, assisting your fellow man, and bringing blessing upon yourself. We have insisted, and again insist upon this last point, because its previous non-accentuation has produced that paucity of giving now prevalent. People daren't give. They haven't got the money to. Multitudes would do their duty, if the fear of consequent trouble to their own dear ones were taken away. You will not endanger your family by giving up to the standard which the Deity has indicated as applicable in your case. Absolutely to the contrary.

Recently there has appeared in the Press much painful correspondence relative to "unemployment amongst Christians." When reading it we could not but wonder if these Christians, for whom one feels the most intense sympathy, had been tithe-givers in the days of their previous comparative prosperity. If so, we are sure and certain that their present

experience, though trying to their faith so long as it lasts, will be very short, and abundantly made up to them. Whilst this correspondence was continuing, a letter appeared in the *Life of Faith* from a contributor signing herself "Cathie," part of which we reproduce :—

> "Twenty-five years ago, being influenced by reading the life of George Müller, I was led to give a tenth of my earnings to the Lord. I think I was then earning six shillings a week. The first few years I found it sometimes a sacrifice ; one shilling out of ten seemed a lot. But it became such a habit with me to divide at once, and put away the Lord's tenth, that for years it has been no sacrifice.
>
> "Now what is the result ? This, that I have proved the truth of "Him that honoureth Me, I will honour." All through the war, and since, I have experienced no poverty. Though a shop assistant, and now over forty, I have been away ill only one week . . . What makes it all even more wonderful is that soon after twenty I became slightly deaf : this has gradually increased, and yet, praise the Lord, I am still keeping my situation. When I read sad cases of unemployment I marvel at His mercy to me. Goodness and mercy have indeed followed me all the days of my life."

One testimony of this type is worth reams of argument. Continued serious misfortune in the things of this world is avoidable, and is avoided by those who in monetary matters put God first, and self after. We have not been sent into a world in which it is a mere matter of chance whether we sink or swim. If our Lord told his followers not to be anxious about the morrow He at least inferred that it was possible so to live as not to need to be anxious about the morrow.

In the course of a very interesting chat with a Rabbi the writer was informed that it is not legally incumbent upon the Jews to pay tithe under present conditions. They are away from their national centre, and the old tithing system was so much associated with the Temple and all that it stood for that, we presume, the one will not be restored, as a binding ordinance, until the other has once again been erected. "But," he said, "on one Sabbath of every year I instruct my congregation about their duties as regards monetary matters. I tell them that their position in life, rich or poor, has been marked out for them and they cannot change it. I also tell them that money given to the poor, or for the education of a child, is money that will always come back, whatever their station." Other Jewish teachers take a less adamantive view of the fate of the individual for, said Rabbi Isaac, "Four things may avert the evil in a man's destiny: prayer, almsgiving, the change of name, and the change of conduct." And, save for change of name, which savours somewhat of occultism, we heartily agree with him. The manner in which prayer and alms are associated in Bible and Apocrypha is worthy of deep meditation. "Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God" (*Acts* x. 31). "Be not faint-hearted in thy prayer, and neglect not to give alms" (*Ecclesiasticus* vii. 10).

It gives us intense pleasure to note that the subject of systematic giving in general, and of tithing in particular, is coming more and more to the front. On the same day recently two newspapers were published, the *Church of England Newspaper* and a Jewish journal.

The former said, in reference to Christian Finance "all our monetary difficulties would be solved if we resorted to the Jewish system of tithing." The latter contained notes of a most interesting conversation with a young Jew, who roundly declared his wish that the tithing system might be restored here and now; in no other way did he think it possible that the needs of the Jewish poor could be met. It is obvious to us that any individual Christian or Jew who thinks like this should start by tithing his own income. He is then morally in a position to draw the attention of others to the wisdom and the necessity of the practice.

Of course systematic giving and tithing are not one and the same thing. There is a strenuous attempt being made to establish the former without necessarily bringing in the latter. This is all to the good, but it is not all to the best. Many of my readers will have been asked to join some Free-Will Offering scheme in connection with their own church. We trust that they have done so. Church Finance is becoming more business-like. We hope it is not going to become too much so. For a semi-bankrupt Church to call its members together, prepare a budget, prevail on the adherents to divide this pecuniary responsibility amongst themselves each in accordance with his means, divide this by fifty-two, and then hand in an envelope every Sunday with his quota for that week enclosed, is a capital achievement, and the church will have finished with its empty treasury for good and all. It is reminiscent of the old Quaker system, with the difference that the Quaker took some risks. The "Friends" used, at the beginning of the year, to send round an official to each household asking the

head how many "folds" he was willing to take up. Suppose he said ten. After completing his list the official would add up the number of "folds" promised, let us say for purposes of illustration five hundred in all. At the end of the year the expenses were ascertained, and their total divided by the "folds," the value of each "fold" being thus ascertained. For instance, if in the case we are considering the year's expenditure had totalled £250, then the "fold" would equal ten shillings, and the man who had promised ten folds would be called upon to pay in five pounds to the church treasurer. A neat method, requiring some faith.

The Free-Will Offering system has proved to be an enormous advance on the old slip-shod, haphazard, ungodly methods. At the same time we personally are not called upon to advocate it. Your own church officials doubtless have done that. This book is written for the purpose of inculcating the tithe, the Whole Tithe, and, we had almost said, nothing but the tithe. By which we mean nothing less than the tithe. Give more if you want to and can. After some experience of tithing you will want to, and you will also be able to. Out of the two shillings in every pound of your income which you are about to surrender to the Sacred Treasury, you will naturally be able to deal liberally with your Church treasurer in the matter of his finicky little envelopes, which will then, of course, in your own case be totally unnecessary. For the sake of example, however, they may still be advisable. We regard this envelope system, wonderful as are its results, as merely a half-way house to the full adoption of God's system, which is the tithe.

And we sometimes wonder if it would not be simpler to adopt God's system right away, and have done with it. Certain American churches have gone on from Free-Will Offering to Tithe Offering, still utilizing the envelopes for the collection of the tithe. The Tithe churches have beaten the Free-Will churches hollow in the matter of financial results. We personally object to the payment of tithe to the church, as your own place of worship is a very small unit in the Kingdom, and the "sacred tenth" is due to the King directly, not to your church council as His representative. Only that part of it is required by your church which is necessary to the thoroughly adequate maintenance thereof. (A church is not adequately maintained where the provision for the minister's, organist's, and verger's salaries and pension funds are not on a liberal scale.) We believe that these tithing churches divide their pecuniary surplus amongst other good causes, but that won't do. A tithe-payer's responsibility to God in the matter of the disposal of this consecrated fund is as we have said, direct, and you ought not to place your responsibility on the shoulders of other men, nor should the other men expect you to do so.

By way of more pointed illustration of our meaning, let us indulge in a short anecdote, which happens to be true. A certain Wesleyan clergyman, belonging to a family renowned for its scholarship, repaired to his study one day for the purpose of devoting a few hours to his books, as was his constant practice. On this occasion the right atmosphere would not come. Volume after volume was tried, and it was impossible to work up any interest in anything. For purposes

of research the morning was an "off" morning. Highly disgusted with himself he pulled on his boots, and started away, after a couple of hours of desultory and unintentional idleness, to pay a pastoral visit to a wealthy member of his congregation, a lady much renowned for her good works.

It was still early, and therefore, an unusual hour for a call. He had nothing to talk about. After discussing the weather and a few rather hopeless topics of a like nature he rose to go. The lady also rose, took from the mantelpiece a five-pound note which was lying there, and handed it to the minister, who received it with considerable surprise. "This is very kind of you madam, but what is it for?" "Oh, I had the idea you might be dropping in some time or another, so I just put it out for you. It is for the poor." "It is exceedingly good of you, but I really haven't got anyone on my list at present to whom it might be of service." "Never mind, Mr. ——, you will be sure to have a use for it some time, so take it now."

Accepting the note, he set out to walk back home, when it occurred to him that he might as well kill a little time—if we may be permitted so horrid a phrase—by calling on another member of his flock, not in nearly such affluent circumstances as the one previously mentioned, but nevertheless apparently perfectly comfortable in her surroundings. Walking up to the door he knocked for admittance. The knock was answered by the lady of the house. She had obviously been weeping. Entering, he kindly enquired the cause of her trouble, asking if there were anything he could do to assist her.

"Oh, Mr. ——, I am in sore distress this morning,

and I never thought I should have to mention such a matter to you, but I am so wretched I must. Though poor, I have always been able to meet my engagements until to-day, when things have failed me. It's now five minutes to twelve. At noon exactly the landlord will be here for my rent. And for the first time in my life I'm short of the money. I could not bring myself to tell anyone before. I've been on my knees all morning imploring God to help me, and I don't know what to do."

"How much are you short?"

"Five pounds."

The moral of the story lies on the surface. There may come an occasion in your life when you have to act, and to act at once, and if your tithe be hypothecated to the church treasury instead of to the Sacred Treasury, you will in that moment be unable to act at all. Moreover, to a systematic giver there sometimes comes an unrecognized but nevertheless definite divine guidance in the disposal of his gifts. Which gifts therefore must be at his disposal, and not at that of a church official. The tithe-payer is a worker together with God. Such events as that chronicled above are rare, but they happen.

The Whole Tithe then—to God. Out of it something really substantial—to your church.

It may be that at some point or other in our pages one or more of our readers have been inclined to commune with themselves somewhat as follows: "If the teaching of this book be correct, which it is not, then obviously the whole problem of maintaining the hospitals and churches and other charities is solved.

for we shall have nothing to do but simply expend, each of us, one-tenth of our income for these purposes, and quietly wait for the promised increase which will again put us right as regards our own finances. The gain to our fellow-men will be incalculable, and that without loss to ourselves. Granting the author's primary postulate—that when God makes a promise He keeps it—then in one year all our hospitals could be enlarged, re-equipped, and have balances on the right side. All the men could be trained for Home and Mission work who would offer for service. Ministerial salaries in all denominations could forthwith be raised to a right and liberal sum, and at sixty years of age the clergy could retire on a decent and proper pension, which, amongst other things would mean that the church was continually served by younger and fresher men. The distressing waiting lists of the orphanages would entirely cease to be. All this could be done, and, for my part, I should immediately hasten to take my share in this good work, only, on the testimony of the Word of God, the promises of God are null and void. In the Old Testament we see the disasters which befell Abel and Job. In the New Testament, the continued and unrelieved poverty of our Lord and of St. Paul. If there ever were four men who were consistent givers, these must have been the four. And it may be added that if Ananias were a much greater liar than the modern church member, he was indubitably a much greater giver, and we all know the fate which he endured. Consistently with my duties to my own family I must therefore refrain from the luxury of tithing, leaving the practice to men of greater faith or greater folly.

For in this case it would verily seem that 'faith is that capacity by which you continue to believe what you know to be untrue.'"

While *we* set about to deal with the above instances do *you* set about to pay your tithe. You will then find out from your own experience whether God be true or not. We may also remark that whilst the sin of Ananias, who lied to God, was a heinous one, the sin of the respectable, infidel church member who makes God lie to man, is infinitely more so. That the above cases present difficulties is true. That they present insuperable difficulties is untrue. On candid examination these difficulties vanish into thin air.

The defence that there is not one word in Scripture to prove that in any of the instances cited, was one penny of tithe—as tithe—ever paid into the Sacred Treasury, by the person or Person mentioned, is one that we dismiss with contempt. We believe that tithing started when the world started, and that in the cases of Abel, Job, Our Lord, and the Apostle to the Gentiles, tithe was paid.

What happened in regard to Abel? For his righteousness in rendering a full offering he obtained the commendation of his Maker, and the consequent hatred of his covetous brother Cain, who murdered him. For a good man "sudden death is sudden glory." Dr. Moffat translates the relevant passage in Hebrews, "Abel offered God a richer sacrifice than Cain did, and thus won from God the record of being 'just' on the score of what he gave." If a man be summoned in a flash into the presence of his Great Judge immediately after that Judge has pronounced sentence—pronounced him "just" in the sight of

God—what is there for that man but an eternity of happiness, and why therefore do we think ourselves called upon to waste our sympathy over one who would have disowned its necessity? For his wife and children there was a great grief to be faced, but Abel had left to them a good heritage, that blessing of God which falls upon the descendants of a man who is righteous in His sight.

We take it that the Book of Job is one of the most wonderful in the world. Possibly it is the most ancient piece of sacred literature extant, and as literature it is still unsurpassed. Any remarks that we could ourselves make with reference to this profound work are of so merely amateurish and jejune a type that it is perhaps hardly worth while putting them on paper. The problem of the book is that of God's justice, when viewed in the light of human suffering. Since Job's time, though the problem is as insistent as ever, that which gave it its sting has been taken away. For God has become incarnate, and, as a human being, has Himself suffered. That is all that we propose to say about the matter. The question raised in the Book of Job could not be fully answered in the days of Job. It cannot be fully answered now. But a Christian is compelled to approach it from a new position. And whenever he faces the mystery from this new position the darkness is relieved by the light which comes from a cross set up upon a hill.

The history of Job is of course so well known to our readers that even a brief recapitulation is unnecessary. He was a richly blessed man, of very great substance, rejoicing in a family of seven children. The children died with tragic suddenness and the wealth all vanished

in a day. Then Job himself had a long and most painful illness, his sufferings being added to by the interminable argumentative utterances of three friends, who, deeply obsessed by the hallucination that the good man is always the happy man, cheerfully adjured him, at inordinate length, to the confession of sins which he well knew he had never committed. This seems to us to be the meaning of their windy orations, so far as we are capable of understanding them. Finally the Deity Himself drew near, and revealed something of His majesty and wisdom to His suffering servant. Job then exclaimed, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself." The Lord rebuked the three friends, who were ordered to bring sacrifices for Job to offer on their behalf, and then comes a verse of immense depth of meaning: "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends; also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."

He was not given fourteen children, for that would have meant that the seven who had died were lost. When God gave Job twice as much wealth as he had had before, and only the same number of children as were previously his, it was a sign to Job that that first family were amongst the saved, and were waiting for him in another world. As for this world's possessions, they all came back, in two-fold aggregate, and his last days were spent in great honour and peace and prosperity, still, we are sure, the same friend of the poor and the fatherless as he has been in the days of his original wealth.

We know little as to the final disposal of the pre-

Levitical tithe, but the opinion of that most learned Jewish commentator, the Rabbi Aben Ezra, is entitled to great respect, and it was his view that the purpose of Jacob's tithe was two-fold—firstly for sacrifices to God, secondly for gifts to the poor. It was the custom of Job to sacrifice to God (*Job* i. 5). It was his habitual practice to make gifts to the poor. He solemnly asserts and re-asserts his personal righteousness in this matter. "When the ear heard me then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy . . . I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor." (xxix. 11-16). And again, "If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof . . . if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep . . . then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone" (xxxi. 16-22).

We are then personally convinced of three things, that Job was a consistent giver of the best type, that he lost nearly every possession he had, and that God vindicated His own righteousness and His servant Job's righteousness by restoring to him his wisely used wealth—doubled. And we think that for the purposes of the present treatise that ends the matter. The passage "The Lord turned the captivity of Job,

when he prayed for his friends" may have a message for many a good man when in circumstances of darkness and anxiety. Let it be fully admitted that to him who considers the poor it is never promised that he shall escape the time of trouble, though it is emphatically promised that in that time of trouble "the Lord will deliver him" (*Ps.* xli. 1). The burden of this passage in Job seems to be once again that prayer and alms should go together. So far from the case of Job teaching us that a consistent giver runs the risk of losing all things, it asserts that such loss, if it occurred, could only be of the most temporary nature. So much for the doubtful cases of the Old Testament.

In the New Testament the first reference to money or money's worth occurs in the story of the Magi. They came to the infant Jesus, and offered to Him "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." One cannot help wondering if their present of gold were in the nature of a mere token, or if, granted that it was undoubtedly a token implying their belief in Christ's kingship, it was not also, though a symbolic offering, still one of some substantial amount. It used to be the custom in the north of England, and one heartily wishes that such ancient customs were retained in these prosaic days, that a threefold gift should be made to every new-born child. It consisted of a piece of silver, up to the value perhaps of a crown piece, of a tiny loaf of bread, and of a little salt. It implied a threefold wish, that the child should never lack money, food, or the grace of God. Perhaps the observance of this kindly and inexpensive little rite had its origin in the story of Kaspar, Melchior, and

Balthasar, and their richer offerings to the infant King. When we read of Herod's attempt to kill the infant Jesus, and of the consequent necessity for the Holy Family to fly to Egypt, one cannot help associating this pecuniary gift of the Wise Men with the event. It was as though the money requisite to the expenses of the journey had been placed in the hands of Joseph just before the emergence of an otherwise insurmountable difficulty. In our ignorance as to the worth of the offering we cannot be certain that our suggestion is true to fact, but there is an old and wise saying that "He who will watch for Providence shall never lack a Providence to watch." And this incident may be an instance in point. Men who had travelled several hundred miles to tender their homage would hardly render the outward symbols of that homage in a form devoid of all intrinsic value.

Between the time of our Lord's visit to Jerusalem at twelve years of age, and His baptism by St. John at about thirty years of age, we have no biographic detail of his career. From the fact of there being no mention of St. Joseph subsequent to the former of these events it has been assumed, with practical certainty, that he had died in the interval, and that our Lord had continued his business as the village carpenter at Nazareth, thus maintaining His mother and providing for the family's necessities—the Eldest Son taking the place of the deceased father. It is further assumed that during this unknown period He was a poverty-stricken Jewish artisan, that on abandoning the carpenter's bench for his work as the Teacher of Israel he left His mother to the care of his brothers, and that during His period of three and a

half years as Teacher He continued to endure a poverty only a little harder than had fallen to His lot throughout His previous experience.

We cannot verify the quotation, but we believe it was either Dr. John Watson or Dr. Stalker who first suggested that the years of the workshop at Nazareth had resulted in "savings," and that these savings, eked out by the contributions which He certainly received from others (*Luke* viii. 3) enabled our Lord to carry out the three and a half years of the ministry. We venture to assert that the learned writer, in recognizing one truth, had been blind to another. According to our own small ability, we shall now endeavour to work out the theme in all its bearings.

Our suspicions as to the correctness of the usually accepted tradition were first aroused by the fact of our Lord, at His death, confiding His mother to the care of His beloved disciple St. John, not to one of His own brethren according to the flesh. If for three or four years previously she had been provided for by her own sons, why did not this arrangement continue? The only explanation we have ever come across is to the effect that our Lord's brethren would now be so much occupied with their apostolic labours that maintenance of another would be an impossibility, and this explanation is, in point of absurdity, worthy of being placed on record. To begin with, St. John was an Apostle, and the same objection, if it were an objection at all, would apply in his case. To end with, if any person holding this view will undertake to prove that any of our Lord's brethren held apostolic rank we shall have much pleasure in perusing his thesis.

Why then did our Lord indicate to St. John that

it was His desire that he should now and henceforward take Mary " to his own home " ? Because up to this time the maintenance of His mother had been our Lord's own charge. For the future her welfare was to be the care of the Apostle whom Jesus loved.

From any one passage of Scripture it would be impossible to prove this. Taking all our Scriptural resources together, we think that it becomes abundantly evident. The Galilean Carpenter had had a business career of a type sufficiently successful to enable Him to " finish His work "—to completely fulfil the trust left to Him by the dying St. Joseph. When He began His wanderings as Teacher, His task as carpenter was ended. His savings were of such amount as to provide for His mother during the three and a half years which intervened before the Resurrection. After that supreme event He would have assumed the Kingship, and St. John would bless the day when first he gave hospitality to the mother of the King.

We believe that on leaving the home at Nazareth His surrender of His possessions to His mother was complete, and that for Himself He retained nothing. It was the practice of our Lord to go through the difficult place first, and then call those who were His to follow after Him. Thus, there were no capital sentences passed upon His disciples till Christ had Himself been crucified. The death of St. John the Baptist is not to the point. The Baptist was the last of the great line of old Hebrew prophets, St. Stephen the first of the Christian martyrs. Now there have occasionally been men called to Christian work who knew in themselves, with absolute assurance, that to accomplish that work there must be a complete

divesting themselves of all things. These cases are very rare. Sadhu Sundar Singh would appear to be a modern instance. When such a man receives such a call, it is a call to do what Christ actually did. We think that the story of the Rich Young Ruler corroborates our statement. "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" "Thou knowest the commandments." "All these have I kept from my youth up." "Yet lackest thou one thing; sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." And when he heard this he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Now think of what this means. Put yourself in the position of the Young Ruler, and see things as they appeared to him then. A wealthy, educated, aristocratic young man seeks out a village carpenter who has become a preacher, and asks him some questions about spiritual things, concerning which spiritual things he is evidently assured that the preacher has great knowledge. The peasant brings him down to material things, tells him to sell everything he has, and give it to the poor. Under such circumstances he might have gone away angrily, or he might have gone away scornfully, more probably the latter. But we can only account for his going away sorrowfully by assuming that the message had sunk into his very soul as being the truth, for him. Could such a message have been so forcefully delivered by any other than a Man who had been through the same experience, had been face to face with the same temptation, and had overcome it? We do not think so. The Ruler may have contemptuously asked the carpenter what *he*

knew of such a sacrifice, and met with the crushing reply that all he knew of it was that he had made it. Remember that at this time Christ was not surrounded by any halo. The Ruler did not see Him as we see Him. Unless the enquirer were assured of the absolute sincerity of his peasant teacher the suggestion that he should sell all and give the proceeds to the poor would strike him as a barefaced attempt to exploit his resources for the benefit of the peasant's own class. And from the clear wording of the story the incident never struck him in this way. There is something lying behind it all, something that the Ruler knew, and something that we can only surmise. And that something consists in the fact that Christ called this other young man to follow Him through the Needle-gate.

There is nothing improbable in all this. We know that the youthful Christ " increased in favour with God *and man* " (*Luke* ii. 52). We know that He was an excellent workman. " Take my yoke upon you . . . for my yoke is easy." This was an illustration, used in the course of His preaching, taken from His former trade, it having been part of His work to make wooden yokes for the oxen of the local farmers. We all of us have some knowledge of the dry wit and extreme outspokenness of the village workman when dealing with his fellows. If not, turn to your Shakespeare, and be assured of it. Had an inefficient country carpenter started talking to the occupants of the village green about the " easiness of his yokes " such awkward reminiscences and stinging japes would have rained upon his luckless head as would have effectually deterred him from further oratorical

efforts of a kindred nature. When Christ used this phrase it was because He knew that not one farmer in His audience but would assent to its truth as regards the material yokes which were part of the output of the bench at Nazareth. Not one derisive smile in *all the* crowd. It was a safe illustration; not only safe, but telling in its allusion to admitted fact. Now a popular and efficient workman is likely to be burdened with repeat orders. He would be rather in the position of dictating his own prices.

Of this position our Lord did not avail Himself, as He made it a habit to deal on generous and kindly terms with His customers, only to find that His open-handedness was abundantly made up to Him. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over shall men give into your bosom, for with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" was His record of His own business experience. In this verse he is not inculcating the necessity for benevolence to the poor. He does that elsewhere. Here he speaks of the rendering back to a big-hearted man of that which he has yielded up by the very recipients of his generosity. A homeless and workless man cannot return that which you give to relieve his necessities. God will see to it that it comes back to you, but it cannot find its way home through the object of your charity himself—he has nothing to give. In this passage our Lord is speaking of liberality towards those who can repay liberality, in other words of your procedure in business, not in almsgiving. The course which He advises us to follow He had Himself taken, and the benefits which He says will come back

to us had returned to Him. From the clear teaching of the Gospels we may thus assure ourselves of the fact that in the days at Nazareth our Lord was a popular, capable, and prosperous artisan.

What course He followed as regards His giving we are not told. Dr. Lansdell was of the firm opinion that, having come into the world to obey the whole law, He rendered His tithes as the law commanded. We concur. We think He would as a matter of fact carry out the law in this matter to its limit. At the same time, when it comes to practical details, we pause. The Mosaic Code, in those clauses relative to the payment of tithe, was written for agriculturalists, and was not applicable to tradesmen. They would doubtless sufficiently fulfil its terms by rendering to the Sacred Treasury the pecuniary equivalent. We do not propose, for the sake of brevity, to pursue this subject here, save to point out that, as we have already indicated, a woman who gave to God a day's wage out of her weekly income earned the particular and enthusiastic eulogy of our Lord Himself, and that the manner of that payment, the fund in which it was placed, was left entirely to the woman's own judgment.

We have given reasons for our belief that the material benefits consequent upon His systematic giving accrued to the Man Christ just as they will accrue to any other man, and that it was in consequence of these material benefits that He was at length able, looking at the matter from the human standpoint, to leave the home at Nazareth and appear as the Messiah, His duty towards His mother having been fully accomplished, and He being consequently

liberated from the hitherto existent necessity of remaining at the post of duty, that post being the house of the mother who was dependent upon Him. If there was one thing more than another which our Lord detested in the Jewish perversion of God's law it was the easy method which they had invented of dodging their responsibilities towards their own parents. A graceless young Jew would, under such circumstances, bring his savings to the priest, formally dedicate them to God, receive them back, less a percentage, and then escape his obligations as regards the maintenance of father and mother by declaring that he had no funds. It was Corban, a devoted thing, money belonging to God, and therefore not capable of utilization for his own relatives. It is not impossible that our Lord had Himself been subject to a similar subtle temptation, a temptation to use His savings for His own maintenance during the days of His ministry. They would then have been in a sense Corban—devoted to God. He made them truly Corban by devoting them to His mother—every penny thereof.

The suggestion that the Galilean Carpenter had at one time funds at his disposal which, to one in His position, would appear to be wealth, may to most of our readers appear new and startling. In addition to the facts adduced above, we may quote one line of Scripture which transforms suggestion into certainty. "He was in all points tempted like as we are" (*Hebrews* iv. 15). Probably the two greatest temptations which can fall to a man are those of poverty, and those of wealth. What is wealth can only be estimated by the social position of the owner. The

wealth of one would be the poverty of another. Whatever wealth means, it carries with it the idea of a substantial surplus over immediate necessities. The money requisite to the maintenance of a home for three years and more would we think be wealth to a young country artisan. The temptations incident to poverty our Lord endured during the ministry. The temptations of wealth must therefore have attacked Him at a period previous to the ministry. And such temptations the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews clearly infers He had experienced. "All points" covers this point. For anyone who accepts the testimony of Scripture therefore we take it that our contention is established, and our case made out. When Christ obeyed the law he received the benefits of the law. This accomplished He was called upon, as a few amongst His followers have at times been called upon, to surrender all those lawfully accrued benefits. This was final, for though God's material blessing rests upon the systematic giver, we do not know of any material blessing for the man who yields his all. It is written that "he shall have treasure in Heaven." But such a step as giving your all must never be taken without absolute and certain knowledge that it is God's will in your case. Systematic giving is God's will in virtually all cases. Usually a man can most serve God with his capital by tithing his income, not by so dealing with it that he ceases to have an income.

Chapter III.

ANANIAS having displayed no system or method in his benevolence, such as it was, and great as it was, we are not in reality called upon to give any space to the consideration of the matters associated with his unsavoury name. As however some interesting points arise in the course of the narrative of his abortive gift, we shall endeavour to say something about the incident, primarily remarking that we regard this episode, which has descended to us clothed in more than typically Lukan brevity, as one of the most puzzling in the New Testament.

It is Sir William Ramsay's belief that we do not possess a record of the event as it occurred, that the tragic and dishonourable deaths of Ananias and Sapphira had so seized the minds of members of the early Church that they gave free reign to imaginative horror, and that when Luke heard of it, at a later period, fact and legend were so intermingled that the historian never disentangled the one from the other. Ramsay particularises the utter callousness attending the burials of the two delinquents. We are personally unable to accept his suggestion. Luke wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and would not be permitted to fall into serious error. As to whether we have the uncorrupted original text is another matter, but we do not recollect having anywhere read that any doubt has been cast upon it. We must therefore address ourselves to the story as it stands.

Very early in its history the Church fell into certain Gnostic errors, borrowed from the Essenes. These errors were economic and doctrinal. Their economic fallacies displayed themselves in a quasi-communism, which we regard as a cancerous growth in the body of the economic theory of the Old Testament, that economic theory revealing itself as a benevolent and open-hearted individualism. Moses said milk the cow, and give liberally of the milk to the poor. St. Peter said kill the cow, and let the poor have the carcase. Or if he did not himself say it, we have no record of his having administered a stern and godly rebuke to those persons who were acting in this way. Moses' method meant a little for everybody for all time. St. Peter's—one gloriously hilarious feast and then death. Or would have done had the theory been carried out to its final and logical conclusion.

This quasi-communistic theory the poor of the Church took very kindly to. Naturally they would. They would also cast a by no means friendly eye upon those wealthier members of the Church who retained their economic sanity, who thought it more honouring to God that their fellow churchmen should work than sponge. There were real problems for the Apostolate to face. Work was, we believe, scarce in Jerusalem. In our enthusiasm for a sound economic polity we must not be unjust to men labouring under a great and practical difficulty. Suffice it to say that no right result will follow a wrong method. Our Lord's solution of the involved question of unemployment was that in times of bad trade a man should receive the full day's wage necessary to his maintenance after doing such period of work as work could be found for

him to occupy himself therein, though this period amounted only to one hour per day. Labouring even for this limited time the unemployed would so retain the habit of labour that they would not lapse into the unemployable. We may remark that a full scheme of economics has never yet been worked out from Biblical sources, and that we believe that the Scriptures are full of final wisdom on this subject, for those who have eyes to read.

The Christian poor of the Holy City thus learning to look with disfavour upon the wealthy brethren who had not yet dispossessed themselves of their goods for their benefit, their dislike doubtless found expression in various verbal comments ranging in their acidity and intensity from vinegar to vitriol. It is quite easy to give the other fellow a nasty jab at an "experience meeting." We have heard it done. Let us hasten, however, to add that, while suspecting that this sort of persecution was the primary cause of the downfall of the weak-backed Ananias, we should not, on the Scriptural evidence before us, have brought such a charge against a minority of the first generation of Christians had we not ascertained this view appealed even to so cautious and orthodox a commentator as Kitto.* "Give us bread and circuses" shouted the Romans to their alarmed emperors. "Give us bread and prayer-meetings" whispered a few impoverished Christians to the perturbed Ananias. The Roman Empire and the Judaistic Church have ceased to be. The truly Christian Churches of that sound and wise

* Students of Kitto will not need to be informed that he puts his points with much less bluntness than is the habit of the present writer.

economist, St. Paul, will last in one form or another until the Head of the Church returns to greet them.

Ananias had a possession and sold it. The transaction took place under such circumstances that the Apostles were led to believe that the whole proceeds of the sale were to come into the common stock. Some portion of the proceeds was retained by the vendor, who paid in the remainder. Evidently Ananias "acted a lie" in the presence of St. Peter, a man morally so little stronger than himself that, at a later stage in his history, and when under the influence of the same bitter tongues, he fell into the same type of sin, "he dissembled" (*Galatians* ii. 13). For this subsequent dissimulation St. Peter had the humiliation of being "withstood to the face" by the brave and true-hearted St. Paul, a man who, though in his humility he described himself as "the least of the Apostles" and "not worthy to be called an Apostle" was one who knew not the fear of man. Though we are rather anticipating events, we cannot help wondering if when St. Peter received his rating from St. Paul, his self-contempt was rendered more bitter by the recollection of the treatment he had, under great stress of feeling, meted out to the toadying, lying little Ananias and his wife Sapphira. For judicial functions are to be performed in a judicial manner. We have no doubt that when St. Peter pronounced the death sentence on this wretched and wicked woman he was doing the will of God. We have no doubt that in ten thousand instances where English judges have had to pronounce the death sentence upon criminals who were unhappily, merely meeting with their deserts, they were equally doing the will of

God. But they utter those terrible sentences in a very solemnly impressive fashion and often with a most earnest injunction to the prisoner to repent while there is yet time.

It may be objected that Sapphira had had full time given her for repentance. Three hours elapsed between her husband's death and her own. Wesley calls them "three precious hours," though the fate of Ananias was unknown to her. Bad as she was we wonder how St. Peter's question "Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much" appeals to an English lawyer. Was it not that type of leading question, suggesting its own answer, which would have been disallowed in our own Law Courts? St. Peter should not have mentioned any figure. The Authorised, Revised, and Weymouth's translation all agree in their rendering of this phrase. Dr. Moffat supplies one much more favourable to the Apostle, "Tell me, did you only sell the land for such and such a sum?" We trust that Dr. Moffat gives us the right purport of St. Peter's query. The word "only" contains a fair warning.

There still remains a greater mystery about the story. St. Peter, in rebuking Ananias for his mendacity, used the astounding phrase "Why hath Satan filled thy heart *to lie to the Holy Ghost.*" These words are perhaps the hardest to understand of the whole narrative. The Holy Spirit is the searcher of all hearts. He knows us through and through. It is, thus, impossible for a sane man to begin to attempt to lie to Him. Nevertheless, Scripture is not to be cavilled at, but to be studied with reverence and diligence. If this phrase be a fair showing forth of

the original some deep meaning lies behind it. Can we arrive at that meaning? Archbishop Lightfoot was so keenly alive to the almost insuperable difficulty confronting us that his rendering reads "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to belie the Holy Ghost in thyself." He believes Ananias to have been one of the hundred and twenty upon whom the Holy Ghost fell (*Acts* i. 15, ii. 4), and that therefore in acting thus falsely he was belying the Spiritual gift which was his. Others take it to mean that he belied the Holy Ghost in the Apostles, that he did not believe them to have sufficient spiritual enlightenment to be aware of his fraud. It would seem, however, that the concensus of opinion is in favour of accepting the phraseology of our customary versions.

Our own small and possibly valueless contribution to the solution of the problem is based upon Chapter v. 2 "He kept back part of the price . . . and brought a certain part." We believe that the word "certain" here is a literal translation of the original, and the force of that word in this connection seems to have been missed by those commentators whom we have consulted. From the narrative as given it seems as though the fraud had very nearly achieved success. Unless St. Peter had been miraculously illumined he would have accepted without demur the money offered to him as being the full price of the possession. We are not to suppose for a moment that the Apostle was a mere fool in matters of buying and selling, and particularly so at that eventful time when, a great deal of property being sold and the proceeds paid over to him as treasurer of the Church, he would have an excellent view of the state of the market.

Which fact, of course, was known to Ananias, and makes the attempted peculation all the more astonishing.

It sometimes happens that realty passes at much above its intrinsic value owing to some purely personal reason. Thus, a fortunate friend of our own was approached quite recently by a man who explained that he must have a shop, and have it at once, and have it on our friend's property. This necessitating inconvenience to the vendor, it is to be presumed that something extra would be paid by way of compensation for dispossession, and, had the vendor been an Ananias, which he was not, he would have made this item alone a pretty stiff figure. We are personally assured—though our assurance may be of little value to anyone else—that something of the same sort occurred in the case we are considering. The property had a certain fair market value, which " certain part " of the price was paid in to St. Peter. The premium Ananias retained. He had vowed the whole proceeds of the sale to the poor, and meant to keep his vow. Securing, unknown to the Apostle, a most unexpectedly good sum for the possession, consisting as we have suggested, of market value plus premium, he started to persuade himself that the premium formed no part of the price. He lied to himself, and with such complete success that he altogether befogged himself, with such complete success that he could tell his lie both to God and to man believing it to be the truth. We have heard it asserted that the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost consists in a man so absolutely persuading himself that evil is good that he accepts evil for good, that Satan becomes his God. If this

be so, then we take it that lying to the Holy Ghost consists in so deliberately tampering with truth that one comes heartily to accept a lie in place of the truth. This weak and false man, if our suggestion be correct, found himself in a situation that might have momentarily puzzled a strong and true man. Under such circumstances a straightforward individual might have felt some temporary wonder as to what it was that he actually had vowed. But such a man would have been down on his knees asking for that clear guidance which men of utterly honest intentions ultimately receive. The sin of Ananias was the logical scheme of an individual who was suddenly called upon to do some extra thinking and did not take God into all his thoughts.

We have felt much diffidence in dealing with this incident, and rather throw out our hints in the hope that some reader, more able than the writer, will have his curiosity so thoroughly intrigued by the sequence of events in St. Luke's narrative that he will delve deeply and finally into the mystery, and furnish us with the whole truth. We are certain that the story has not so far met with that careful analysis at the hands of a competent scholar which it deserves. One remark we must make, and then finish with the subject. Certain commentators have been so struck with the treatment meted out to this precious pair, who had lied to the Holy Ghost once, by St. Peter, who had denied Christ thrice, that they regard St. Peter as being merely the mouthpiece of God; they hold that no personal element could possibly enter into the condemnation of another by an individual with the Apostle's record. Possibly this is so. But in fairness

to St. Peter let it be remarked that three hasty lies, the result of extreme physical terror, lies of which he repented straightway, lies which his Lord freely forgave him, do not in their sum constitute so serious an offence as that one falsehood, the result of quiet continued successful distortion of the truth, which Ananias and his partner perpetrated. St. Peter had sinned, and repented, and was again to sin, and to repent. But Ananias sinned and never meant to repent. It is a terrible fact that the three most awful deaths in the New Testament, those of Judas Iscariot, of Ananias, and of Sapphira, were the deaths of three persons who had used their brains to rob the poor.

Ananias was not a systematic giver. He was a successful self-deceiver. His catastrophe was the result not of giving, but of not giving, of vowing something that he was never called upon to vow, and of withholding something which only his vow "had rendered meet." He is of no further present interest to us.

Now we come to a really vital case, that of St. Paul. Here we have a Jew who was, according to the law, blameless. This carries with it the conclusion that he must have systematically honoured God with what means he had. Then how are we to account, on our theory of God's being true to His reiterated promises, for that poverty which dogged him to the very end of his days?

The poverty of his early ministerial career was a real thing, consequent upon his refusing to avail himself of the means which the Almighty had provided for his proper emolument. This refusal may have proceeded, and as a matter of fact did proceed, from

an honourable motive. The poverty still overshadowing his later life was simply non-existent. It only has its being in the imagination of those who refuse to accept the plain Scriptural record. After the year 57 A.D., St. Paul was a well to do and prosperous individual, everywhere received as a man of consequence and position.

We were ourselves brought up to the acceptance of the customary view. But certain incidents in the New Testament record raised doubts, and the more we probed into the matter the more insistent these doubts became. We shall now proceed to indicate the relevant passages, subsequently returning to the consideration of the Apostle's monetary dealings with his converts during the previous portion of his mission to the Gentile world. The following most interesting quotations all refer to events occurring in or subsequent to the year we have mentioned.

In *Acts* xxi, 23, 24, there is a sentence which, in Moffat's translation, reads, " We have four men here under a vow ; associate yourself with them, purify yourself with them, pay their expenses." It is assumed by those who knew him intimately that the payment of such expenses will occasion no embarrassment to St. Paul.

In chapter xxiv. 26, " Felix hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him." The Apostle was long under the surveillance of this Roman Knight, who would have a very fair idea as to his prisoner's monetary status. A Roman Knight did not risk his position by accepting a five shilling bribe from a prisoner. He hoped for such a gratification as it would have been worth his while

to have received. And he must have been satisfied that the wherewithal for such corruption existed.

Again, turning to the thirtieth verse of the last chapter, "Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house." Considering that he was under guard, this would be a somewhat expensive luxury, using the phrase colloquially. Expensive necessity would perhaps be an apter term. However, the accent lies on the expense, and this the Apostle was in the position to meet, and that for the full term of his wearisome detention.

In the *Epistle to Philemon*, as Philemon received it, in what are now vv. 18, 19, there occurred a few lines written by the Apostle himself, not by his secretary. St. Paul is requesting Philemon to take the runaway slave Onesimus back into his service, and at that point, taking the pen from his assistant, he indited the words, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on my account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it." If, on the receipt of the letter, Philemon proceeded to restore Onesimus to his former post of duty in consequence of the Apostle's request, then his action in so doing would have been sufficient consideration to make this contract binding, and St. Paul would forthwith find himself in a position in which he could legally be called upon to pay over a sum of money of an amount unknown to him at the time of pledging his credit. Anyone who thinks this noble old man capable of placing himself under a legal obligation which he could not fulfil on the due date casts a slur upon his character as a gentleman which St. Paul himself would have intensely resented. He was scrupulously

careful in all business details, so much so that he appears virtually, and probably actually, to have insisted that the money constituting the Great Collection should be placed in the hands of trustees other than himself (1 *Corinthians* xvi. 3). Those who regard the incident as a little playful humour on the part of the writer of the *Epistle to Philemon* take a shallow view of the problem, even after all proper allowance has been made for the latter part of v. 19. St. Paul was fully aware that no man can presume upon the conduct of any other individual in any matter in which the latter happens to occupy a position legally unassailable. He had had wide experience of life, and as a result thereof would doubtless have cheerfully subscribed to Mathew Henry's dictum " You can never expect too little from man—or too much from God." Many unfortunate persons who have regarded the backing of other's bills in the light of a joke have subsequently found existence far more full of humour than are even the pages of Pickwick, though the type of such humour proved to be somewhat mordant. In which it differed from Pickwick. Fools of this sort are not only themselves fellows of an infinite jest, they are the cause of wit in others. Their flashes of innocent and unconscious merriment are wont to set the financial table on a roar.

It must further be remembered that the man who voluntarily bound himself to meet this unknown obligation had in his youth been a student " brought up at the feet of Gamaliel," or in other words he was one to whom every phrase and sentence of the Hebrew Scriptures was well-nigh as familiar as his own signature. And these Scriptures contain some pretty

caustic matter as to the giving of security for other persons. (*Proverbs* vi. 1, 2 and elsewhere). When therefore he gave Onesimus the benefit of his credit in this generous way the reason for the action was based upon a double foundation, namely, his own broad-hearted benevolence, and the fact that he had credit to give. Either when he signed this promissory note he had such ample means that he could honestly dare to face a call of not unreasonable but still of unascertained extent, or St. Paul was not possessed of that scrupulous rectitude in matters financial with which on the evidence we have always accredited him. The former is the correct solution.

Once again. During the term of his later and stricter incarceration at Rome, probably in September 67, he wrote to Timothy, "The cloke that I left at Troas . . . bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." In those days, when books had to be laboriously copied, instead of being turned out in thousands from a press, their cost was enormous. For a philosopher they may have been a necessary possession, but nevertheless it was only the comfortably circumstanced philosopher who could make them his possession. The fact of St. Paul's having a library is vividly indicative of the fact that St. Paul knew what it was to have spare cash rattling in his pocket.

If any one of the above instances taken singly can be ingeniously explained away, the whole five taken taken together can not. This was our opinion before we had the fortune to meet with Sir William Ramsay's work upon the same theme. It was therefore a particular source of pleasure to us to ascertain that

this learned archaeologist's great judgment entirely corroborated our much lesser one.

Reverting to the poverty of his earlier career, whilst keenly alive to the great benefits accruing to his converts from their habitually exercising themselves in systematic giving, he made a point of rigidly abstaining from requesting any remuneration for his own labours, though he would not refuse such remuneration when freely tendered. His very self-denial in this matter was turned into a source of calumny by his Judaising opponents, who malignantly contrasted his self-renunciation with the practice of other Apostles, and suggested that this apparent unselfishness proceeded in reality from the consciousness that he lacked Apostolic authority. Some of the most burning passages in his Apologia were the outcome of this very insinuation. It would be wearisome to the reader to take him, as we might do, through passage after passage in the Epistles relating to his pecuniary dealings with the churches he founded. They will recur readily to the mind of any systematic student of the New Testament. He would beg readily and insistently for others ; he would instruct his disciples as to their duties towards other clergy. But for himself he would ask nothing. He could always fall back on his trade of tent-making. When a monetary contribution came he was prepared to acknowledge it in terms pulsating with warm appreciation. Hence the *Epistle to the Philippians*. He was fully aware of his rights. He knew that God had appointed that those who served the altar should be partakers with the altar, that those who planted a vineyard should eat the fruit thereof, that those who fed the flock should eat of the milk

of the flock. But he preferred to preach the Gospel without money and without price. God had been true to His promises, and had furnished His faithful servant with the proper and legitimate opportunity of securing an adequate return for services rendered. Of which opportunity the servant preferred not to avail himself. This is a sufficient answer for the purposes of the present thesis. But God had other promises to fulfil, and did so on an ample scale. During the eleven years of the Great Collection St. Paul had been "considering the poor," and in consequence experienced the seven-fold blessing pronounced upon the man who habitually takes this course. The work was consummated in the year 57, when the money was paid over to the officials of the church at Jerusalem. From this very time Paul the persecuted entered on a new phase in his career. Even though a prisoner he is everywhere treated as a person of distinction, and in the Roman Empire money often made the man. Something of a very vital nature had occurred as regards his material resources. The *Acts of the Apostles* hints at a cessation of that long estrangement between the Apostle and the other members of his still Jewish family. No details are given.

Now let us at this stage very briefly recapitulate. We have seen that passage after passage in the Scriptures deal with the subject of giving. Their burden is always that this work of providing systematically for the continuing necessities of the ministry, of public worship, of foreign missionary work, of the sick, and of the poor, is of such urgent insistence in the mind of the Deity that He will, as a matter of fact,

invariably take such charge upon Himself, that money used for such purposes is money lent to Him, that in short the luxury of giving is one that we will never know, all that falls to our lot being the joy of " lending unto the Lord." The Deity regards such lending as evidencing faith in Him, and obedience towards Him, and thus makes it His intention and purpose to honour those who in this way strive to honour Him. This is the general purport of the wide Scriptural teaching bearing upon this matter. There are many instances in Holy Writ of persons who, having habitually done their duty, or exercised their privilege, in this direction, consequently and naturally received the promised reward. These we have disregarded, and have fixed our attention only upon those three or four cases which, on a hasty glance, seem to negative our theory. In every one of these cases the evidence, when carefully examined, goes to establish our thesis. The promises of God have been substantiated in the history of His servants. When Dean Swift entered the pulpit of his Cathedral at Dublin to preach a charity sermon, gave out his text " He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will He pay him again " ; uttered the words " If you like the security, down with the brass." and then descended the pulpit-stairs, his sermon finished, he had committed an act that was characteristically eccentric and used terms that were characteristically vulgar, but after all, was there much more to be said ?

We have further noted that those charitable acts in which a man exercises himself have a value in the sight of the Creator which outlasts the present age. Quotations from the sayings of our Lord in support

of this contention have already been adduced. They are final, and need no corroboration. If they did, we should appeal to 1 *Timothy* vi. 17-19, which in Moffat's translation, reads " Charge the rich of this world not to be supercilious, and not to fix their hopes on so uncertain a thing as riches but on the living God who richly provides us with all the enjoyments of life; tell them to be bountiful, rich in good works, open-handed and generous, amassing right good treasure for themselves in the world to come, in order to secure the life which is life indeed."

Throughout our plea has been for systematic giving, the regular setting aside for God's various purposes of a stated amount of your income. In the vast majority of cases both the teaching of Scripture and the tradition of the church indicate one tenth as a proportion acceptable to the Creator. We have taken upon ourselves to suggest that in the case of those persons whose circumstances are so narrow that in their inmost conscience they believe their responsibilities indicate a less proportion, and yet do really and truly desire to honour their Maker in a systematic and Scriptural way with such means as they have, the Third Tithe should be utilized as a temporary substitute for the Whole Tithe; that is, that they allocate to the Sacred Treasury eightpence or ninepence in every pound of their income until the time comes when they can take full rank as Whole-tithers. We trust that this suggestion may bring mental relief and increased usefulness to those of our readers who are honestly entitled to regard themselves as falling within the class for which the hint has been thrown out.

For spasmodic giving, " giving as your heart

inclines," financial love-feasts and such like we have nothing but the most unmitigated contempt. We do not for one moment suggest that a man well blessed in this world's gear should confine himself to his tenth, —the Jews did not, and we ought not. But in the case of a well to do man it is better to raise the standard of systematic giving than to let any portion of his charity be merely spasmodic. It is the constant drip that wears away the rock, not the sudden spate. To bear the expenses of an earthly Kingdom taxes should be levied with thoughtfulness, once a year, and collected with carefulness, throughout the year. It is just the same with the Kingdom of God. Let us in this matter serve God with our reason and our judgment, as well as with our benevolence. For a gift to be perfect the heart should be hot as fire, and the intellect cold as ice. The warm heart will give cheerfully. The cold reason will give according to the donor's means. The combination of the two will prevent the donor from setting aside a too small proportion of those means for this purpose. The tenth is, generally, the best starting-point. Would it be considered that we savoured too much of detail if we now mentioned two or three small matters of very practical import? The tithe is to be taken upon "all thine increase." If you live in your own house, the fair rent thereof is part of your increase, and to be regarded as such for the purposes of tithe. And if you sell an investment at a profit, if the said profit be not increment, we do not know what it is. A legacy may be regarded as transfer of capital, but a wise man will rather lean to consecrating his newly acquired wealth by devoting a portion thereof to God than to greedily hoarding up

the whole sum for himself. We ourselves incline to the view that gifts out of income should go to income, and gifts out of capital should be used as capital—for permanent endowment of church or charity—but we do not seek to curtail any other man's liberty of action.

In bringing to a close our remarks upon the subject of almsgiving, there is one urgent matter which we desire most definitely to impress upon the consciences of our readers. The division of their tithe as between the various objects having a claim thereto is entirely a matter for their own consciences, as guided by their Maker. Such guidance will frequently seem to be withheld, and this means that the donor must give according to his own judgment, after duly weighing the pros and cons of the situation. Under no circumstances do we wish even to appear to dictate to another as to the disposal of that portion of his hard earned or honestly acquired money which he has devoted to the Giver of all good things. But without any semblance of dictation we may be permitted to indicate one stream of benevolence which flows in a trickle when it ought to be rushing in a flood. We refer to the provision for the aged and retired clergy of all churches.

Too often no such provision exists. This charge might we fear be hurled at the Church of England, and at some of the Nonconformist Churches also. Where it does exist, it is inadequate. Take the case of the Wesleyans. We single this Church out, not because we believe them to be the greatest sinners in this respect, but because we have an uncomfortable suspicion that they are the greatest saints. If their saintliness in this matter prove to be of a somewhat insufficient type, then it will probably be found on

enquiry that the duties of the other churches in the same field are still less adequately performed. Taking them as a whole, the Wesleyan Methodists are well to do, warm-hearted, and given to rendering a respect to their ministry which shows itself in forms more substantial than lip-service. Now what provision do these excellent people make for their retired clergy?

We ascertain our facts from the columns of *The Wesleyan Methodist*, under date of 17 April, 1924. In the first place their scheme for the support of the retired ministers, or "supernumeraries," is known by the ghastly title of the "Worn-Out Ministers' Fund." For a Churchman to inform the Wesleyans that their clergy, on retirement, have no business to be "worn out," that the Mosaic ordinance was that all Levites were to retire on full allowance at the age of fifty, would be an act of the most impertinent folly, so we forebear, merely asking our fellow members of the Church of England to pause here and do a little thinking—not about the Wesleyans, but about some things nearer home.

The gist of the Report for the year—presumably the year ending 31st December, 1923—lies in the sentence "There are now 540 supernumeraries and 558 widows receiving annuities, amounting to £82,968 9s. 9d." We do not know what proportion the annuities of the supernumeraries bear to those of the widows, but take it to be as two to one. This makes the average annuity of a retired Wesleyan clergyman work out at less than two pounds per week. We submit that the lowest possible figure should be £200 per annum. The Wesleyans thus discharge fifty per cent. of their liabilities towards the helpless gentlemen

who have spent their lives in the service of their church, reckoning these liabilities at their minimum. And we have a suspicion well-nigh tantamount to certainty that this Church is far ahead of all others in the recognition of this particular reponsibility. May we tender to them our very respectful hope that, having gone half-way in the matter, the Wesleyans will set a magnificent example to the rest of us by completing the course ?

But what about the rest of us ? What about the instances one occasionally comes across, those exceedingly painful instances in which a poor doddering old parson or minister still potters about his church, undoing most of the good which he had previously accomplished, merely because he is driven to this hard course in spite of his better judgment ? If he leaves the church, he leaves it for the workhouse, or for something little better. He has spent the whole years of his virile manhood in a sphere which brought him little income and no pension, and he stays on because he has nowhere to go. From every point of view such a state of affairs is execrable. To take the lowest level, a gentleman should not be placed in so invidious a position. To come somewhat higher, the efficiency of the church ought not to be thus radically hampered. To rise to the highest level of all, we know of no method by which our crass ingratitude to a merciful and bountiful Creator can find so exquisitely adapted an expression as in this same sin of neglect of His old and helpless servants. We can hardly imagine any forgetfulness on our part more hurting and wounding to the heart of the Deity than this indifference to the last necessities of those now

aged and often infirm men who spent their best years in sowing to us spiritual things. What account are we to render for the fact of their not now reaping the benefit of our carnal things? Good people often mourn the "indifference of the age to the message of the Church." God Almighty mourns the indifference of the Church to the men who brought the message, the men who were in their prime twenty years ago. We personally believe that there is the most intimate connection between the two sets of circumstances. We believe that the Deity has a tremendous blessing and an enormous sphere of usefulness for that religious community which first sets its house in order in this respect. The very lowest salary for a town minister should be £400 a year and for a country parson £300 a year. The minimum retiring allowance for any cleric of any denomination should be £200 a year at the age of sixty. And this is indeed placing things on a very minimum basis.

We heartily wish that these and cognate matters might be brought before the Church by pens and tongues more powerful and persuasive than our own. The days are evil. The robbery of £1,000,000 from the Welsh Church was a brilliant achievement. How many thousands of millions this inane and wicked act cost us in the Great War is known to God alone. That war dragged on and on in an endless fashion, and we now know that the German collapse might have come at a much earlier stage than it did. In the providence of God a speedier termination could most easily have been reached. We won the war, and are now engaged in the pleasing task of paying hundreds of millions a year for victory. On all hands God is

robbed, and people apparently will not learn that this robbery of God means an impoverished nation. The pulpit is mostly silent on the matter. Every individual Englishman who tithes his own increase is engaged in the work of making our financial burdens lighter. He is not only, as regards this one particular act of obedience, a good Christian, but he is a splendid citizen. When a vast number of individual Christians collectively subscribed some £700,000 in partial repayment of the million pounds stolen in the circumstances indicated above from the Sacred Treasury, we can once again merely remark that God alone knows what further evil they averted from the nation by their action in so doing. God has created the material universe and will in part be served and worshipped and honoured by the consecration of a set portion of the material things of the universe to Him. And until this is done "the times are out of joint."

As we have stated previously it is a real source of gratification to know that the teaching of systematic giving of some sort is in many quarters on the increase. We believe, however, that the Deity has inculcated such giving, not of some sort, but of one sort, and that the tithing sort. If the Deity has a standard in this matter it is for us to conform to that standard, and not to set up another of our own. It only remains for us to remit this happy duty to the faith and practice of the reader, asking him not to be deterred therefrom by the feebleness of our words, but to be determined thereto by the strength of God's promises.

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